The Need for Art: The Outlines of Individuality in the Flood of Images

Abstract: The research presented in this paper begins from the time of turmoil in the field of arts and thinking (about art) in the late 19th and early 20th century. The shift from traditional techniques and operational procedures to modern ones, which is followed back from the time of industrial revolution, contributed to the elimination of art as the relevant operational procedure and consequently to the elimination of the values on which the traditional art survived.

Although modern art drew its inspiration from the well of resistance to tradition and social reality in which the masses played an important role, the paper attempts to follow the task the art has inherited from earlier times – the artistic display of sense at the level of image, which differentiates it in the recent cultural, economic and intellectual conditions from the mass industrial production of consumable images. The paper examines the possibility of differentiation of artistic image in postmodern period, at the time of excessive expansion of mass media and electronic simulation techniques, following the realisation that the modernist ideal of progress and the exclusivity of art are unviable.

The paper presents the arguments of the philosophers who deny the possibility of art in postmodern era. Contrary to that, it indicates that there is a vast area of artistic production which testifies with its exquisite experiential and cognitive value in the field of image to the need for artistic mimesis and its articulation of reality at the time of simulation.

Keywords: modern art, mass, iconic difference, postmodernity, simulation, individuality, image
If we are involved in art, it is not solely because we take that issue to heart, but because of its significance in respect to the general issue of modern civilization.

Giulio Carlo Argan

Introduction

The research presented in this paper begins from the time of turmoil in the field of arts and thinking (about art) in the late 19th and early 20th century. The shift from traditional techniques and operational procedures to modern ones, which is followed back from the time of industrial revolution, contributed to the elimination of art as the relevant operational procedure and consequently to the elimination of the values on which the traditional art survived. In the new technological conditions, art found itself at a turning point and chose a new path which was in opposition to its past. Modern art devotedly participated in building the culture which was „intentionally preoccupied with its progress, the culture striving to sever from all traditions, focused on constant surpassing of its own results“ (Argan, 1982: 113). Art, modern in its program and dedicated to the ideal of progress, was also referred to as „modernist.“

Although art, in conflict with tradition, undergoes profound changes, the paper attempts to follow the task art undertook from earlier times – the artistic presentation of sense at the level of image, which differentiates it in the recent cultural, economic and intellectual conditions from the mass industrial production of consumable images. The paper examines the possibility of differentiation of artistic image in postmodern period, at the time of excessive expansion of mass media and electronic simulation techniques, following the realisation that the modernist ideal of progress and the exclusivity of art are unviable.

In this paper, postmodern is understood in broader terms, not as a style but as an epoch which matured in the second half of the 20th century. The prefix „post“ does not denote the contrast or the overcoming of modern, as is frequently interpreted. Instead, modern is inevitably woven into postmodern, and postmodernity occurred in modernism, thus „the relationship is a complex one of consequence, difference, and dependence“ (Hutcheon, 2004: 38). In line with Welsch's remarks, postmodernity is a tendency to glorify the plurality achieved by radicalising the demands of the 20th century modernity, by distancing from imposed uniformity and homogeneity of the modern age,\(^1\) without denying its role in its own past (Welsch, 2008).

\(^1\) The reference here is to the modern period in the sense of the new age image of the world, which „covers a somewhat broader time span, reaching deep from the Rennaisance and the Enlightenment“
The encounter between art and mass production of consumable images and objects

Art provides a precious insight into the structure of perception of a specific period, of a certain human collective, both in terms of its formal and social features. Changes in the medium of perception were described as a degradation of aura in the essay entitled „The Work of Art in the Age of its Technical Reproducibility“ (Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit) published by Walter Benjamin in 1936. The increasing penetration of technical reproduction into the field of art led not only to technical reproduction of inherited works of art but „it also had captured a place of its own among the artistic processes“ (Benjamin, 1968: 219-220). Benjamin believes that modern techniques heralded with photography and film threaten traditional art techniques. Technical reproduction deprives the work of „its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be“ (Ibid. 220). The „here and now“ of a work of art is the splendour which has disseminated the sense in the broader horizon of tradition in terms of the history of the work, changes it had undergone, its owners, and the number of potential copies.2

Technical reproduction, claims Benjamin, meets the requirements of the masses, a viewer of the new age who strives to bring the phenomena closer and actualize them. Reproduction completely destroyed the substrate of uniqueness and unrepeatability of a work of art, making a unique phenomenon a mass phenomenon. The destruction of the uniqueness and unrepeatability of a work of art, the destruction of aura undermined the contradiction on which the traditional art rested, the „unique appearance of distance, however closer it may be“3 as the new media in the early 20th century please the masses striving to „bring things closer spatially and humanly“, which ultimately annuls the original ambience and the size of an object and quenches the thirst for equality of all

(Musabegović, 2000: 21).

2 Art owes this splendor to its roots in ritual. The first pieces of art we know of were created to serve the cult. To the pieces of art, the holders of cult value, it was more important to exist than to be seen. Often, hidden from the eyes, those works existed under a veil of spirituality. „With the emancipation of the various art practices from ritual go increasing opportunities for the exhibition of their products.“ (Benjamin, 1968: 225). Art preserved the ritual function even in the periods of secularisation of cult value, for example in the Renaissance. In the new role of serving the beauty, cult value was preserved in the concept of authenticity: „The authenticity of a thing is the essence of all that is transmissible from its beginning, ranging from its substantive duration to its testimony to the history which it has experienced“ (Ibid. 221). If the painting was more exhibited than the mosaic and fresco that had preceded it, photography suppressed the cult value to the benefit of the exhibition value. Benjamin anticipated that the shift from the cult value to the exhibition value would lead to substantial changes in art in the period of technical reproduction, to the loss of substrate of uniqueness for the sake of availability to the masses, which in his time grew into importance in the social processes, as well as in the reception of a work of art.

3 This is a formulation of the cult value of a work of art in the categories of space-time observation. Cult image remains „true to its nature, it remains ’distant, however close it may be“ (Benjamin, 1968: 243).
things: „Every day the urge grows stronger to get hold of an object at very close range by way of its likeness, its reproduction“ (Benjamin, 1968: 223).

The dominance of modern techniques over art and craft as the production processes created confusion in the hierarchy of values. Although serial or industrial production had existed before, „the invention always remained the most important moment of human activity“ (Argan, 1982: 38). Craftsmanship promoted quality, and a work of art appeared as a superior quality product. When the machine took over the tasks from the hand or, as Benjamin says, when with the arrival of photography the eye took over the most important duties from the hand, quantity took the primacy over excellence and a series of units took the place of an individual. In the traditional system of values, it was important to a human being not to repeat himself too many times. On the other hand, industrial production was based on repetition in the overall economisation of social work and served to elevate the average level of culture (Argan, 1982). Art loses the power it had as a model for non-artistic activities. The significance of art based on craft techniques is lost. Carlo G. Argan (1982) sees the crisis in which art found itself as a declaration of conflict between the industry and craft that the industrial revolution had brought along. Although at first, industry followed the values of the former influential art techniques – the testimony to which the industrial design serves – and it attempted to acknowledge the inventive impulses equal to those produced by art in the new technological conditions, the issue remains that industrial technology wants absolute authority.

While the technique grows more and more independent, the man is not the one who makes the decisions, who is the subject; quite the contrary. Machine logic threatens to swallow both the object and the man. In a pursuit for a fast production and consumption, the product has no possibility to materialise itself as an object; once it has left the production line, it becomes insufficient, surpassed by something new. A role model of industrial production imposes a tempo it is hard to keep up with and the material consumption becomes replaced with the psychological one (Argan, 1982). The best testimony to that is fashion, where it is not about the consumption at the level of object but image. New forms

4 Modern techniques are fruits of modern science, which, contrary to the intuitive area of art, promoted a rational view of the world and a logical way of thinking. Modern sciences take the lead over art in the field of inventive activities (Argan, 1982).

5 The end of the historical cycle is the guidance of technique from within, due to the inability to attain cooperation between science, art and technique, as it once used to be, for example in the Renaissance (Argan, 1982).

6 Jean Baudrillard (1985) is pessimistic when it comes to finding the outlines of individuality in the flood of industrial production of consumable images and objects. For example, he believes that the inability to fulfill the ideals of enlightenment (the exchange of social relations in the sense of improving the conditions of life, the reduction of poverty and unemployment, and inequality) design owes to political economy in its background. The promise of reconciliation of the soul and matter in the design in the form of balance between the function and form, which would restore the dignity of art from the past, was
from the early 20th century – radio, television, graphic publicity – in one word the mass media, brought with them mass communication too, which takes place „below the area of consciousness“, almost solely by means of images. This exposure, often unconscious too, to the iconic and auditory manifestations, the vast quantity of information, builds our psycho-sensory potential and hinders the way to true art (Dorfles, 1963). The attack on the human perception through image, in the gesture of hyperbole or repetition, has aggravated critical judgment and the reasoning (Argan, 1982).

Under such circumstances, Benjamin considers, art is losing the battle, adapting to the means imposed by the situation in the society in the era of the market, media and anonymous relations. When art was liberated from the feudal patronage and became spiritual practice in the civil public, the idea of the autonomy of art was developed. The liberation from the inherited rules and canons, which can be traced back from the pre-romanticism, led to the prominence of creative individuality and its stylistic correlation: originality. Benjamin (1968), however, believes that the liberty was illusive, as the foundations of artistic creation were formed, on the one hand by anonymous audience as the recipient, and on the other by the economic factors – publishers and art dealers.

**Modern art**

In the flood of the industrial production of consumable images, a question is raised as to the aesthetic quality of the new technological modes of the production of image and the potential of art following the threat posed to traditional art techniques by the modern ones. Dorfles explains the crash in art or the thinking about art on the turn of the nineteenth century into the twentieth as follows:

The transition of painting from the figurative into the non-objective or abstract phase, the transition of tonal music into atonal, the transition of architecture from the prehistoric (trilithic) construction from brick and stone to steel and cement, was a truly gigantic leap which was sufficient to throw the attitude of the viewers (and the official culture) off the balance in respect to the pieces of art. (…) For example, painting is leaving the canvas and the usual oil paints, resorting to collage, bags, scrap; sculpture is restored with wire, sheet metal, plastic material; architecture is discarding “pillars and arches”; music is using new electronic sounds. (Dorfles, 1982: 56-57).

hindered because fashion is a universal system dictating the production of signs, the production which also dictates the destiny of an object. The idea of synthesis of the function and form is in the hands of the exchange value, that is, the circulation of capital. As opposed to the time before the industrial revolution, when the prize was a finished work, the object is now replaced by distribution.
Modern art does not rely on the inherited philosophical principles, the foundations of classical culture; it is not governed by traditional rules and canons of beauty. Painting and sculpture abandoned figuration, which was considered indestructible. Art relinquished the inherited canons of proportion and symmetry to industrial products. In the surge of serial production, mechanical production and pseudo-realisation, artists announce the „death of talent“, as the perfection of artistic performance, which was once associated with a masterpiece, may be found nowadays in any industrial and crafts product (Dorfles, 1963).

Although in technical terms art is undergoing significant transformations, it continues to be a model intimate activity which re-examines the rules and canons in the new conditions – confronted to the logic of the machine, a haven for inventiveness and creation, which cost it its own communicativeness and availability. Traditionally, art has the task of pointing to the neglected domains of reality, the domains of the human. In the period before the industrial revolution, when spirituality was more appreciated than practice, art was less valuable precisely because of materialisation which was its integral part. Plato considered art to be the third from the truth; he denied its ability of cognition because he saw its task as a reproduction of the existing object; therefore an artist loses sight of the idea of objects he is attempting to present. Let us remember the iconoclastic movements in the Middle Ages and the non-acknowledgement of image as something valuable in discovering the subtle fibres of spirituality and the utmost Divine truth. In relinquishing the visible for the sake of the invisible, the existence of art is jeopardised. In the new conditions of the technological age, the period of technical reproduction, art set out along its well-trodden path – the conflict with the dominant view of the world, the rationalist worldview which inherits modern techniques from modern sciences confronted to art in the area of the intuitive. Over its long history, art interpreted the world with its plastic shapes; its signs testified to the established knowledge at a specific level of human development. Considering the issues his time posed before an artist, modern art pointed to the forgotten area of individuality in the flood of images.

Be it the denial of the process of formation and the handling of the already existing objects, the same as in Dadaism, or be it the return to aesthetic form

7 Gillo Dorfles (1963) is concerned about the phenomenon of the lack of understanding of art, which he followed back from the 18th century, when he observed the discrepancy between the popular taste and the taste of an artist. In that period, individualist and distorted artistic creations became more and more common, which the broader audience was unable to perceive. When art cannot be explained „in terms of an invariable and categorical essence of the spirit“ and the aesthetic situation does not last as long as in the past, oscillations may be observed in both artistic creations and taste (Dorfles, 1963: 21). Artistic expression, the same as taste, varies from epoch to epoch, from personality to personality, from society to society...

8 Clement Greenberg places Dadaism, Marcel Duchamp’s in particular, in opposition to modernism (Hopkins, 2000). Greenberg believed that art should remain occupied with its own medium, „pure art“,
(constructivism), modern art indicates the origin of image; it represents a rebellion against the subordination of image to the circulation of capital and industrial logic – the processes in which it does not have its own, but industrial being. In that sense, art maintains the relationship it has inherited from the past, the relationship towards industrial techniques: art is the technique of imagining and it played a significant role in the informative area at the level of image (Argan, 1982). Modern art opened up new possibilities and understanding by exploring the visual perception. Impressionist research into active consciousness at the moment of encounter with the phenomenal, in other words into the impression, marks the beginning of research which continues with the analytics of vision, for example in Cubism or Futurism (Ibid.). An artist shifts the focus away from the surrounding reality towards complex mechanisms in the background of representation, towards the procedure of creating an image. The canvas thematises the „nature of space, perception and representation“, and modern art is close to theory (Mitchell, 1987: 41).

The peculiarity of modern art is the inclusion of procedures and materials which, up to that time, were not allowed to be found in the field of art, but also the exclusion of everything familiar, customary, and inherited, as well as the avoidance of familiar ways and trodden paths, which made it an unwanted image and excess of taste (Groys, 2008). As a response to the crisis of traditional art techniques at the time of supremacy of modern techniques and the value of industrial production, art became enclosed in the world of „art for the art's sake“, in the pure art which denies any social function and determination by means of objectivity, claims Benjamin. However, artism, which is seemingly fully apolitical, represents a rebellion against and a resistance to commercialisation of all relationships in the society (Adorno, 1997). Therein lies its social legitimacy. A request for autonomy does not mean that art is not representative of social, religious, or other cultural values. It means that art does not have, as was the case before, an instrumental or a relationship of servitude towards external reality (Osborne, 1968).

The motto from the late twentieth century may also be understood unstained by ways of social production which Duchamp included in art, maintaining the position of esthetic exclusivity and distance from the society (Ibid.). This artist, dedicated to objects from everyday life, announces the developments in art after World War II and confirms Lyotard's claim that “in the modern, the postmodern was included only covertly” (Welsch, 2008: 82). It is clear from the above that the terms „modern“ and „postmodern“ are temporal and relative in fact, and that one should return to the essence.

9 Mitchell observes that modern art grew apart from iconography and object of representation. With it begins the distinguished feature of the new image, and that is its „theoretics.“ Literature and image become a part of another kind of discourse – the discourse of philosophy. Theory, in the sense of complexity, the synthesis of aesthetics and other branches of philosophy, literary criticism, linguistics, history etc. has the same relationship with abstract painting which the traditional forms have with representational painting (Mitchell, 1995).

10 Harold Osborne notes that the doctrine of the autonomy of art, its „indifference“ towards external functions and purposes, should not be confused with the radical demand of the doctrine of „art for art’s
as a confirmation of an artist's intentions to create „pure art“ and to see the only sense in creating art, without diminishing the role of art in the society, given that „society is formed and educated, although not solely, by virtue of art“ (Argan, 1982: 113). Due to those aesthetic but social reasons too, creations were increasingly individualist and distorted; however, if we understand art as an important component of our social and spiritual life, the solution to non-communicativeness of modern art may be found in the education for art and education through art (Dorfles, 1963). Modern art emphasises the new, the individuality and the form of aesthetic authority, as well as the reception of a piece of art as difficult and enclosed (Musabegović, 2000), not to avoid the social function but the established, socially accepted communication patterns so that it could have the potential to distinguish itself in an infinite range of images in the conditions of commercialisation of all relationships in the society and the massification of communication processes.

*Iconic difference*

Gottfried Boehm explains the task of art by using the phrase *iconic difference*. How was the iconic difference achieved in the past?

It marks both visual and logical strength which characterizes the distinctiveness of image, inextricably belonging to material culture; it has been inscribed in the matter in a way we cannot renounce whatsoever, but it enables the sense to shine within it, which also surpasses all factual (Boehm, 1995: 30).

According to the above, iconic difference is the realisation of the spiritual in the material, of the sense in the factual, of *logos* in the image. Theorists of image maintain that in the past, the difference between „'iconic difference', the image as an icon, and the language as the logos was recognizable“, (Paić, 2007: 93). Such a difference could be a subject of discussion in the period of humanism, when the painting was explained through its literalisation „by means of the dominant figurative-symbolic iconography and iconology“ (Briski Uzelac, 2013). For example, in perspective painting, this struggle is expressed in the construction of the „shallow depth.“ In addition to the attempts to build by means of abstraction depth on a two-dimensional canvas starting from the surface, a non-transparent surface also had a task to show the content as transparent (Boehm, 1995). In classical art, a constituent element of a painting is the tension between two poles – representation and anti-representation, representation and sake“, according to which art must not have any other value but aesthetic (1968).
artificial presumptions of representation in the background. Benjamin interpreted the contradiction as the power of cult image to maintain the distance in such a way that "true to its nature, it remains 'distant, however close it may be" (Benjamin, 1968: 243).

Modernism, according to Boehm, also had a relationship towards images, which may be expressed with the phrase iconic difference. With the altered material and content, images carried in them the feeling of hostility or inclination towards them. They examined the postulates of art, its principles of representation and elements of a work of art (Boehm, 1995). In an attempt to reflect on creative forms of expression, to establish new ones, "to open up to the unknown areas of reality", image did not vanish in modern art; rather it testified to the iconic in a different fashion (Boehm, 1995: 37). With the emphasis on poetic strength of image in the late nineteenth century, and in the avant-garde art, there is a weakening of the power of the reflection and the strengthening of the original and productive power of image. A modern art image took a step from representation to interpretation; it became aware of its own postulates and it "exposed" those postulates. Therefore, the iconic difference in that case is reflected in the duality of having "something present and at the same time demonstrate the criteria and the premises of that experience" (Boehm, 1995: 35). In that way, Boehm takes art apart, he adds to it the individual iconicity in the abundance of cultural image, where it resides together with the mass culture and technology, with other types of internal and external images.¹¹

Under the influence of Jean Baudrillard’s work,¹² Boehm (1995), however, does not perceive the possibility of iconic difference in postmodern times, in an ambience of, as he claims, the global aestheticisation and simulation at the time of the end of modernity and the agony of realism. The tendency of postmodern era is to transcend the difference between image and reality, in such a way that "facts and fiction converge" (Boehm, 1995: 35). The problem is that the image is no longer able to refer to some other reality which is present in it, and we are blinded by the light of hyper production of images as a "scene of absolute subject which objects observe, instead of the subject observing the object" (Paić, 2007: 40). In line with Baudrillard's apocalyptic

¹¹ The task of his general science of image Gottfried Boehm sees in saving the history of art and thus the artistic image at the age of media.
¹² According to this theoretician, there are two periods in which the Western thinking thematized image:
1. the age of representation when simulation was interpreted as a false representation of something real;
2. modern age of false representation, which is unable to conceal deep reality but only denies reality. The last period, in which we live today, is to Baudrillard (1994) the age of the loss of sense under the influence of the media, mass media and information: in the mass media there is an inscenation of communication, where sense is buried. Contrary to the metaphysical understanding of sign, which could indicate the deep sense, and where there was a foundation which enabled that exchange, we live in the world of circulations of signs. The age without the real has slipped into histeria of production and reproduction of the real. The times past are to Baudrillard the times of ontological safety, when images could still meet the real.
explanation of the end of history in the simulacrum of the real, everything existing gets an ontological predecessor of the media provenience. The absolute supremacy of the media industry causes the flood of images and disappearance of borderlines of individual iconicity. The postmodernist philosophers, Boehm maintains, reduce the image to the „medium of entertaining suggestion in the service of illusionism, which dominates the human daily lives and attempts to erase the difference between reality and its representation. A successful simulation turned image into a strict iconoclastic need. This all-aesthetic world has completely lost art“ (Boehm, 1995: 12).

Boehm perceives that the „appearing image of the work has thoroughly transformed itself; the shapes of presentation have explosively multiplied; what was a boundered, composed and self-focused image now appears as an object, as a shaped canvas, as an installation, as conceptual art, as a performance etc...“ (Ibid. 36). Nevertheless, he does not find a modus of iconic difference in the all-aesthetic world of postmodern period, where the primacy is ascribed to the industry of image with its perfect as-if reproductions. In this agony of the real, art loses its battle, as its differentia specifica is the preservation of difference between illusion and reality. The world without art, the world without the world is also verified in the field of artistic production, suggests Boehm (1995): after aesthetic abstraction, we have a return to photorealism, which is aware that such realism is simulacrum.

**Iconic difference in the postmodern era**

Gottfried Boehm rightfully indicates the difficulties that the media industry and modern technology have caused. The problem is the modern production industry, which „favors image as a copy (Abbild), as a duplication of reality“, where electronic simulation techniques take the representation to a perfect as-if (Boehm, 1995: 35). However, it

---

13 The advancement in the means and procedures for creating an illusion, supported by the development of technology, ultimately resulted in a hyper-real, computer generated image which, without the limitations of the human vision and camera, achieves the hyper-reality with an unlimited resolution and the number of details. The simulation techniques creating the representations of the perfect as-if are nowadays achieved owing to the raising of our perception in a rich media space of the previous century. The realism which is attempted to be achieved in 3D computer graphics implies „the ability to simulate any object in such a way that its computer image is indistinguishable from a photograph“ (Manovich, 2002: 168). In the new age, science and technology successfully cooperated with art with the task of turning the world into a representation. The most obvious example is fine art realism. That alliance successfully existed from the time the perspective occurred, however, when photography brought to perfection a convincing representation of reality, art is liberated from its role of imitating, reflecting or reproducing the existing. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, art is divorced from its traditional goals of creating illusion – that task becomes adopted by the mass media and media technologies: photography, film and video.
would be erroneous to narrow down the reach of postmodernity to Baudrillard’s simulacrum, and embed the return to realism in the postmodern art into the glamour of hyper production of images of the media industry. It is true that postmodernism denies a clear border between the elite or high culture and mass or commercial culture, and a vast area of “empirical, chaotic and heterogeneous” has appeared, such as “Andy Warhol and pop art, but also photorealism and above all the ‘new expressionism’”, such as John Cage or the blend of classical and popular style of Phil Glass (Jameson, 1991: 1). There is a penetration of cultural industry into the area of high culture, the industry which was so denied by the ideologies of the modern (Jameson, 1991). In the inclusion of a variety of forms and signs in the modern art, such as archaic as well as abstract forms and everyday objects, one can see the beginning of the “struggle for aesthetic equality between all visual forms and media” (Groys, 2008: 15), which would ultimately lead to an encounter and mixing of high and popular culture.

Art becomes a fragment of vast reality, flooded with mass consumer and pop-culture, whose guru becomes Andy Warhol as a prophet and implementer of Hegel’s ideas of the ‘end of art’: he revokes the dedicated object of art to create from the banality of the ‘everyday’ the ‘holiness’ of a piece of art“ (Briski Uzelac, 2008: 166). Theoreticians who see the postmodern as a “cultural dominant“ agree, “that it is characterized by the results of late capitalist dissolution of bourgeois hegemony and the development of mass culture“ (Hutcheon, 2004: 6). On the one hand, there is a uniformisation of mass culture, and on the other, postmodernity asserts the difference and not the homogenous identity. Hutcheon maintains that contradiction, even the one previously stated, is at the very heart of postmodernity: “‘difference’, unlike ‘otherness’ has no exact opposite against which to define itself“ (Ibid.). Postmodern differences are multiple and volatile.

Artistic scene, migrating from Europe to the USA did not relinquish its uniqueness and individuality, on which the European culture insisted, but it sided with American mentality according to which “an individual is affirmed through adaptation to the pattern of standardized life“ (Oliva and Argan, 2006: 11). By confronting different, incompatible images of different origins, from different time periods, of different spiritual moods (for example, Buffalo II), Robert Rauschenberg accepts the world of reproduction and continuation of consumable images and objects. Although the shackles of images and sounds are attested in the disorder of the present, we cannot neglect the reference to traditional techniques, which evoke some other time, when the object was related to individual time, to “here and now.“ In respect to the world of images produced by industrial technique, pop-art stands out as an extremely engaged technique, in its cynical identification with the average “consumer person“ (Andy Warhol), or the parodical confrontation of the free gesture of abstract expressionism and imitation of the news photography (Roy Lichtenstein).
The same as pop art, photorealism set the photograph between itself and the world, admitting to the dominance of production and spread of photography. Observing the world through the camera lens, photorealists identify with the man of the mass, hiding the individual gesture and privacy, which makes them close to minimalism. They did not escape the ambience of mass culture of industrial society, both in terms of theme and the procedure. In addition to focusing on industrial objects and the American city landscape, their actions are inspired by commercialism and advertising (airbrush and non-transparent projectors for image enlargement). Contrary to abstract expressionism, or the denial of realism in the abstract of the modern art, photorealism returns to realism; however, it would be wrong to focus on "what", on the photographed object; here it is about the procedure, the performance of photography in the medium of painting. Photographs are explored as significant visual information; the potentials of the modern media are used, as well as the way in which they enriched our world of perception: "objects which earlier unnoticeably flew in a vast flow of the perceived" were isolated and decomposed (Benjamin, 1968: 235). The accent placed on achieving the natural look of the surface, the virtuosity for simulation, often led to abstraction, such as the emphasis on the abstract dimension of urban life (for example, with Don Edy, the perceptive overload precisely leads to unidentifiable abstract patterns) or the rise of self-portrait from the abstraction of dark nuances with Chuck Close. The same as Close's reproduction or errors occurring during the shooting, these procedures examine the nature of realism, and indicate that realism is "always a technique of representation and not the actual manifestation and the appearance of the world" (Šuvaković, 2005: 263).

If nature was once a stronghold of artist's ideas about space and time, now it is the society in which we find citizens attempting to bring close to themselves everything in the image, copy or reproduction. Photorealists start from an average man, who is left to the mass flow of images, and the confrontation with the traditional technique, its invocation in the new context – is a place of iconic difference and incompatibility in the procedure of repetition. In the photorealism, different processes of observation can be encountered, which is what is of interest to artists. As opposed to modern art, the research is not limited to the medium, but it expands on other images of culture and images of the past.

Modern art opposed the "realistic, illusionist and natural images", to which the Western science and rationalism greatly contributed. As opposed to the uniformity of scientific discourse and the focus on the object, modern art is auto-referential, occupied by its own conditions and presumptions. The thematising of inherited procedures, the emphasis on the material and the collage techniques are all procedures applied by artistic avant-gardes to deny the image its role of representation (of a pre-existing reality), which made it a reality an artist brings into the world. Paradoxically, the denial of the world
of objects enabled art to exist, to be „a perfect embodiment of its own conditions of existence“: „It doesn't represent reality. It is a fragment of the real world. It is a thing just like any other—a thing like you and me.“ (Steyerl, 2012: 52). If the task of modernism is viewed in a broader perspective, one may see in the referring of images to one's own medium the beginning of inclusion of other defining factors too (Mitchell, 2009). Postmodern art expands research outside the media to „institutional settings, historical position, relationship towards viewers“ (Ibid. 24). Iconic difference in the postmodern era is achieved by means of auto reference, the same as in modern art, but the exploration of one's own ideological presumptions is done in a broader horizon of cultural, historical, social and other weaves of meaning. By gathering in the same procedure both traditional and modern, representation and abstraction, individual and mass, iconic difference is established in a parodying act of inclusion of what is being disputed.

Conclusion

At the time of mechanisation, the shift from the traditional art techniques to modern industrial techniques and the flood of consumable images of mass production, the traditional system of values becomes jeopardised, and with it the values on which traditional art fostered: originality, uniqueness, inventiveness, peculiarity. In the time of rapid flow of information and exposure to mass communication taking place at the level of the unconscious, there is a fear that art has lost the power it once had as a model for non-artistic activities. Although the traditional art techniques experience defeat, and new materials and procedures are explored to distance art from earlier periods, I followed in this paper the traditional task of art – emphasising the subordinated, neglected and peripheral fields of thought, or reality. Art has always been a significant technique of imagining and is an irreplaceable experiential and informative „accessory“ in reference to image.

This paper shows that modern art achieves its peculiarity with different procedures and means from the ones earlier used by traditional art. The modern art’s abandonment of the world of objects and the role of representation did not prevent its differentiation from the mass flow of industrially produced images. On the contrary, it is

---

14 On the other side of the subject-object relationship in which the object is lifeless and passive, relinquished to manipulation of the subject, here it is about discovering hidden forces which constantly act interchangeably, about the liberation of object as a crossroad of different senses, abstractions, power and sympathy, social and historical movements. Similarly to Benjamin, Hito holds this view, observing that it is typically materialistic: “Because the commodity, too, is not understood as a simple object, but a condensation of social forces” (2006). The issue is which path the language of objects will take. According to Benjamin, it can exceed its description, the role of representation, and become a reflection of the relationships it is defined by; however, a „black scenario“ is also possible, in which the object is a victim of fetishism and illusionism, and thus a prime example of capitalist commodification (Ibid.).
indicated that the distancing from traditional procedures and lack of interest in external purposes and functions, which was expressed in the demand for the autonomy of art, represents a critical standpoint towards the ruling norms, a resistance to the flood of consumable and worthless images of the media industry and commercialisation of all social relations. By including in its field what was not allowed earlier, the interest for the foreign and unexplored made modern art the holder of iconic image, a paradoxical creation, which stands out in the sea of perfect as-if reproductions on account of its production of sense in an auto-referential act. Modern art articulated the experience of reality through the difference between image and reality which was related not to the difference between representation and what it represents, but to the difference between representation and its conditions, a hidden mechanism in its background. Modern art examined the conditions of the medium, conflicting with the realist images, seeing them as springs of Western science and rationalism. Contrary to Boehm, who believes that in the postmodern era, art loses its prised characteristic of maintaining the difference between image and reality, drowning in illusionism which rules over human everyday lives, I attempted to indicate, following a continuous struggle of art to fulfil the inherited tasks from the past, that abstract art is at the same level as photorealism, as both are strategies of perception. I show that the need for art is thus even greater, that, at the time of simulation, there is a dire need for artistic \textit{mimesis} which „always articulates some experience of reality“ (Belting, 1987: 24).

Pointing to the difference between the traditional and the twentieth century art, Boris Groys claims that, in the past, an artist attempted to create a master piece, „an image that would exist in its own right as the ultimate visualization of the abstract ideas of truth and beauty. In modernity, on the other hand, artists have tended to present examples of an infinite sequence of images—as Kandinsky did with abstract compositions; as Duchamp did with readymades; as Warhol did with icons of mass culture“ (Groys, 2008: 16). Abandoning exclusivity and stepping towards a vast expanse of images excluded up to that time from the field of art, „lends these individual specimens their fascination and significance within the finite contexts of political and artistic representation“ (Ibid., 17).

Postmodern art inspects the legacy of modernist utopia, understanding oneself as a part of a „vast practice of creating fragmentary hybrids as the fundamental structural feature of the reconfiguration of the world of culture“ (Briski Uzelac, 2008: 32). The return to realism in postmodernism, which is reflected in a kind of hyperrealism, invites us to examine a broader area of postulates, where we do not stop at the field of artistic or the level of the present. Iconic image is achieved by „collision“ in the same procedure of simulation and knowledge about simulation, by directing a critical and investigative
„eye“ of modern artists on the iconic as realistic in the sense of recognisable form of reality. The difference between the reality and illusion is attained in the difference in respect to what is being repeated, not in the opposition, but by retaining in its core what is being distanced from: „In any case the art lover is not like Plato’s cave dweller, who cannot mark a difference between reality and appearance: the art lover’s pleasure is exactly based upon a difference he is logically required to be able to mark“ (Danto, 1981: 16). As opposed to lulling in the presence encouraged by the mass media in art, a small segment of personal memory is opened up, shaped in the form, the research which is in postmodern period conscious of its historical, social and cultural dimension.

REFERENCES:
Potreba za umetnošću: obrisi individualnosti u poplavi slika

**Apstrakt:** Istraživanje predstavljeno u ovom radu počinje iz vremena previranja u oblasti umetnosti i mišljenja (o umetnosti) krajem 19. i početkom 20. veka. Prelazak s tradicionalnih tehnika i operativnih postupaka na savremene, koji se prati još iz vremena industrijske revolucije, doprinio je eliminisanju umetnosti kao relevantnog operativnog postupka, a posledično i eliminisanju vrednosti na kojima je tradicionalna umetnost opstajala.

Iako je moderna umetnost inspiraciju crpila iz izvora otpora tradiciji i otpora društvenoj stvarnosti u kojoj su mase imale važnu ulogu, rad pokušava da prati zadatak koji je umetnost nasledila iz ranijih vremena – umetnički prikaz smisla na nivou slike, što ga u novijim kulturnim, ekonomskim i intelektualnim uslovima razlikuje od masovne industrijske proizvodnje potrošnih slika. U radu se ispituje mogućnost diferencijacije umetničke slike u postmodernom periodu, u vreme preterane ekspanzije masovnih medija i tehnika elektronske simulacije, nakon spoznaje da je modernistički ideal progresna i isključivosti umetnosti neodrživ.

U radu su predstavljeni argumenti filozofa koji negiraju mogućnost umetnosti u postmodernom dobu. Nasuprot tome, ukazuje se na postojanje ogromnog područja umetničke produkcije koja svojom izuzetnom iskustvenom i kognitivnom vrednošću u oblasti slike svedoči o potrebi za umetničkim mimezismom i njegovom artikulacijom stvarnosti u vremenu simulacije.

**Ključne reči:** moderna umetnost, masa, ikonička razlika, postmodernost, simulacija, individualnost, slika